

Conservative Coalition: Mississippians Asked to Pay \$35 Million “Beef Bailout Tax”

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State Capitol**

(Jackson, Miss.) From higher taxes on cigarette prices to higher driver’s license taxes, Mississippians are being asked to pay \$35 million more in taxes to bail out the state’s failed beef plant operation, according to members of the House Conservative Coalition.

In a press conference today at the State Capitol, members labeled the first \$35 million in taxes raised by the Mississippi House of Representatives over the last two weeks on various state taxes the “Beef Bailout Tax.” The State owes \$35 million on a state-backed loan for the Oakland-based “Mississippi Beef Processors” cull cow operation which was shut down and bought by a Mississippi bank at foreclosure in Yalobusha County last week. The state has until August to pay the loan on the failed project.

In January, the House passed a \$60 million cigarette tax hike which added an additional \$.50 cent cost to each pack. On Wednesday, the House passed a \$55 million hike in various state

taxes from environmental permit taxes paid by Mississippi businesses to a hike on driver's license taxes paid by all Mississippi drivers.

Coalition members said Mississippians should not be made to suffer for the state's failed experiment. "Why should Mr. and Mrs. Taxpayer have to dig deeper into their pocket to bailout a failed idea they had nothing to do with?" said Representative Mike Lott. "Many of the same House leaders who sold the beef plant idea to the membership are the same House leaders who now want to turn around and simply raise taxes on the people to save themselves."

"We should be cutting state government waste to get the \$35 million needed to bail out the beef plant and not asking the taxpayers to do more," said Representative Greg Snowden. "Those who say these tax hikes will solve our budget problems are just wrong. We have to take \$35 million off the top to pay for the beef plant just as we'll be starting a new fiscal year," he added.

Coalition members said they will be asking the House leadership to put the \$35 million funding for the beef plant loan in a separate bill so taxpayers can see where their money is going.

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